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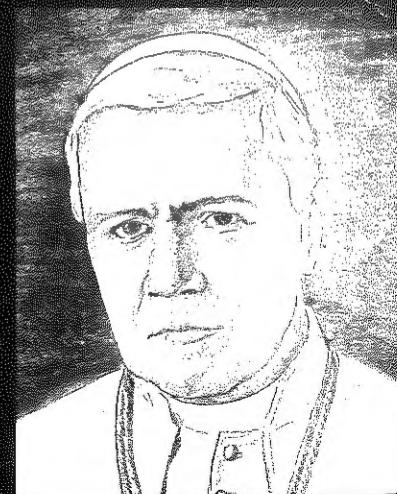
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"The most pressing duty of Christians is to live the liturgical life, and to increase and cherish its supernatural spirit."

— POPE PIUS XII



## A Brief History of Liturgy



Since the present survey begins with a study of Pope St. Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition* and continues down to the reforms of Blessed Pius X, artist John Adrian has incorporated a drawing of these two pontiffs into the cover design.

NIHIL OBSTAT  
Ioannes Eidenschink, O.S.B., J.C.D.  
*Censor Deputatus*

IMPRIMI POTEST  
✠ Balduinus Dworschak, O.S.B.  
*Abbas*  
*Sancti Ioannis Baptistae*

IMPRIMATUR  
✠ Petrus W. Bartholome, D.D.  
*Coadjutor Episcopus*  
*Sancti Clodoaldi*  
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## A Brief History of Liturgy

### INTRODUCTION

The medieval cathedrals, Romanesque or Gothic, which at the time of their building presented a clear-cut pattern to the beholder, often appear to us now as rather confusing structures. One century after another has left in them the imprint of its own expressions of piety, of its mental outlook, of its artistic taste.

About the choir and transepts there appeared a galaxy of side chapels; gradually too the walls came to be laden with tombs and memorial tablets. The tracery of the windows, altered again and again, was filled with stained glass of successive periods and styles. Statues, free-standing tombs, chandeliers, pulpit and pews, the eucharistic tabernacle — these and other additions break the quiet flow of lines that formerly characterized the central spaces. Altars, too, of later date by their number and ornateness diminish the dominant importance of the earlier few.

One needs to be an expert in order to understand all the various elements that make up the scene; as a matter of fact, the archeological studies of experts in the field tax the capacity of our huge governmental inventories of historical documents.

Our *Roman liturgy*, as we have it today, has undergone a similar and still more complicated development. Its history extends over not merely ten but over almost twenty centuries. Its lineaments bear the enduring traces of the evolution of mentality not only of one but of many peoples.

What various influences they are that now and again have modified our liturgy in structure and remodeling: the concise and noble virility of the popes of Christian antiquity; the piety of early monasticism, so devoted to the "work of God" and not grudging the hours given to prayer; the delight in symbolism of the Merovingian and Carolingian periods; the exuberant emotion of the medieval mystics and the systematic intellectuality of the scholastics; the ornateness of the Baroque period; and last but not least the influ-

From Hellenism came the tendency to submit the Christian formulas of prayer to the rules of ancient rhetoric and especially to the particular rules of symmetry. From Hellenism came many technical terms in the language of the liturgy, such as the word *liturgy* itself and the words *mysterium*, *anaphora*, *canon*, *praefatio*, *anamnesis*, etc. And finally, from Hellenism came certain patterns of prayer such as that of the litany of All Saints, and acclamations such as *Kyrie eleison* and *Dignum et justum est*.

Drawing from these two sources, Jewish and Hellenistic, in addition to its own proper elements, the ancient Christian liturgy in the concrete takes form approximately as follows:

In the beginning there were two liturgical services; on Sunday morning a "service of the word" consisting of readings, sermon and prayer, and on Sunday evening the ritual repast consisting of the celebration of the Eucharist either preceded by or somehow joined with a community meal. This latter was called the "agape," and at an early date it was separated from the eucharistic Sacrifice, no doubt because of the increased number of Christians and the consequent practical difficulties and disciplinary problems; and in the course of the fourth century the agape was discontinued. At some time in the second century the eucharistic Sacrifice was transferred to the morning and was joined with the service of prayer and instruction.

While the Eucharist and the agape were still united the faithful were accustomed to bring offerings of various kinds, and after the separation of the two they continued to do this in both cases. This practice and the general ancient custom whereby the offertory elements were brought by the members of the community accounts for the origin of the so-called offertory procession.

The great eucharistic prayer which we call the Canon of the Mass was in the earliest days improvised freely by the celebrant although with adherence to a traditional content; later it was carefully prepared in advance, and finally it was spoken in a fixed and generally accepted text.

The proper language of the liturgy in the first centuries was Greek, and this also in Rome. The change from Greek to Latin came about in Rome probably about the middle of the third century, for about this time Greek begins to disappear in the civil life of the capital city.

The earliest Christian feast-day was Easter, which had its

prolongation of fifty days to Pentecost and was echoed in the weekly observance of the Sundays; in the fourth century Christmas and Epiphany and the anniversary days of martyrs were included in the liturgical calendar; and the structure of a liturgical year from Advent to Pentecost was completed in its main lines by the end of the sixth century.

The daily Hour-prayers, which at first were exercises of private devotion, were recited in community in monasteries from the beginning of the fourth century; and in the course of that same century this custom of community Hour-prayers extended to the various churches.

Such then is approximately the brief sketch of the ancient Christian liturgy as given to us by modern scholarship down to the year 1914. The extraordinary active *research work* of recent years has clarified and enriched our knowledge in regard to several points.

### 1) Earliest Liturgical Text

Until the world war of 1914 it was the common opinion that the so-called Leonine Sacramentary was the oldest extant Roman liturgical text; this was a collection by a private compiler of Mass-prayers composed by a series of popes of ancient times, preserved in the papal archives and brought to completion about the year 550. But in the year 1916 the English Benedictine, Hugh Connolly, proved definitely, after an earlier attempt by Eduard Schwartz, that a text hitherto known as the *Egyptian Church Ordinance* was a Roman liturgical text, older than the Leonine Sacramentary, and that it was in fact the manual which the Roman anti-pope and martyr, St. Hippolytus, composed in the year 220 under the title: the *Apostolic Tradition*.

The importance of this discovery can hardly be overestimated. For thus of a sudden we gain firm ground in our study of the Roman liturgy, and that at an early date and immediately within the period of the martyrs.

It may be objected that Hippolytus, as the head of a schismatic group, perhaps does not record in this book the traditional usage of the Church in Rome but rather presents a new ordinance of his own creation. This objection overlooks the fact that Hippolytus, in his controversy with Pope Callixtus, appears precisely as a champion of tradition and as the vehement spokesman of the conservative party in

Rome. Moreover, the fact that this work of Hippolytus was in use for several centuries in various ecclesiastical provinces in the East as well as in the West shows that it was regarded as a thoroughly orthodox and truly traditional compendium of liturgical directives. The widespread and long-continued use of it shows likewise that it helped to supply a pressing need. We may surmise that it is the first instance of a book which offered ready-made and immediately usable liturgical formulas.

This therefore marks an important transition point in the history of the liturgy; for the stages of charismatic leadership and of local variety in liturgical practice comes to its end and a new stage begins, that of a regularly ordered liturgy and of growing uniformity.

This book of Hippolytus deals with the ordination of the higher and lower clergy, the blessing of virgins and widows, with the catechumenate and the rite of baptism, with fasts, the agape and the Hour-prayers.

The rite of baptism as described by Hippolytus includes the exorcisms and anointings which we have to the present day. But our present wording of the trinitarian formula of baptism does not appear; baptism was administered by way of an interrogatory formula corresponding to the trinitarian division of the Apostles' Creed. The form of interrogation was no doubt suggested by the usages of Roman civil contractual law. The practice of infant baptism is already current.

The eucharistic prayer, which appears in the rite for the consecration of a bishop, presents already the fundamental elements of our Canon of the Mass, although the *Sanctus* is missing. Hans Lietzmann, a theological scholar of Berlin who died in the year 1942, concluded from his analysis of the text of Hippolytus that it must be a development in direct line of the eucharistic prayer which was customary in the communities founded by St. Paul.

It may be left to the reader to consider the significance, in regard to our personal participation in the liturgy, of this venerable history of the eucharistic prayer throughout nineteen hundred years. But let explicit reference be made to what Anton Baumstark has said so beautifully at the beginning of his small volume, *Vom geschichtlichen Werden der Liturgie*, regarding the sense of oneness in Christian community which transcends all the limitations of time.

## 2) The Change of Language

The text of Hippolytus shows that the *language* of the Roman liturgy at his time was still the Greek. Nor is this surprising; for the great majority of the population of Rome, having come in large part from the East and being in its upper strata subject to Hellenistic culture, spoke the Greek language until sometime about the middle of the third century. Even 150 years after Hippolytus a Roman writer, Marius Victorinus, writing in Latin, quotes a part of the Roman Canon of the Mass and in doing so changes from Latin to Greek—which no doubt proves that in his day the Canon of the Mass, if not the other parts, was still in Greek.

Twenty years later another Latin writer quotes a part of the Canon, but now in Latin. And if one adds the further consideration that there are resemblances between the text of the Latin Canon of the Mass and the style and phraseology of certain Roman writers of the end of the fourth century, we are no doubt justified in saying that the Latin language was introduced in the Roman Mass, or rather into its most important part, about the year 380, that is, under Pope Damasus.

Is the Latin Canon which thus came into being an entirely new composition; or is it a translation from a previous Greek text? Anton Baumstark attempted, a few years ago, to prove that the latter is the case. He explains that the phrase in the Canon, *summus sacerdos tuus Melchisedech*, a surprising expression differing from that of the biblical narrative, was due to an error in translation; that the translator from Greek to Latin, unable to render correctly the Greek expression, introduced the phrase: "the high-priest of God" instead of: "a priest of the Most High God."

Baumstark's argument, while keen and persuasive, cannot however be accepted as definite proof. For, granted that there is here an error in translation, need it be that the translator of the Canon was the one who made the mistake; may he not have taken the phrase from some text already at hand, namely that of the Latin Bible? Moreover, Dom Bernard Botte has been able to show that in the Greek-speaking East also, and about the year 380, Melchisedech is called a "high-priest" (*archiereus*). The disputed Latin phrase therefore may not have appeared by fault of the translator of the



Canon; it probably was by that time a generally accepted appellation of the royal and priestly figure of the Old Testament.

On the other hand, the Latin Canon was nevertheless not an entirely new composition. In the course of the first Christian centuries a well defined structure or plan of the eucharistic prayer had been established and it prevailed in both East and West. It was everywhere the rule to include in the eucharistic prayer: 1) our Lord's words of institution of the holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, 2) the epiclesis, or the petition for the operation of the Holy Spirit in the consecration of the elements of bread and wine, 3) the anamnesis, or the prayer commemorating the passion, the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord, 4) a prayer for the acceptance of the sacrificial gifts, and finally 5) mementos for the faithful living and dead.

Along with these elements of the thought-content of the Canon, certain formulas and phrases had become common property of all the churches. It was quite taken for granted that one began with the dialog, *Sursum corda*; that the phrase, *unde et memores* should connect the narrative of the Last Supper with the anamnesis; that there be reference to the angels about the altar; that the eucharistic Gifts be designated as a "spiritual (pneumatic) sacrifice"; and that the prayers for the living and the dead should begin with the words, "*Memento, Domine.*"

Hence we may say in conclusion: the transition from Greek to Latin was in such way that, while retaining the traditional sequence of ideas and various traditionally sacred phrases, the Greek text was renewed according to the genius of the Latin language. A process of this kind would explain sufficiently the resemblances between the Greek text of the Canon according to Hippolytus and our present Latin one.

And then Odo Casel, a Benedictine of Maria Laach, made the very important observation that the designation of the eucharistic Sacrifice, peculiar to the Roman Canon and appearing already in the fourth century, as a "reasonable oblation" (*oblatio rationabilis*), and as a "spiritual (pneumatic) sacrifice," is actually a usage peculiar to St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan.

This testimony justifies a presumption, which is strengthened by other considerations, that the Latin Canon, which was established in the fourth century and is maintained to

the present day, is the work not of a Roman bishop but of the great renovator of the liturgy in Milan. Not Pope Damasus therefore, but St. Ambrose was the pioneer in the transition from the Greek to the Latin in the liturgy; but it was the great merit of Pope Damasus that by the supreme authority of the Roman See he secured general recognition of the decisive action of the bishop of Milan.

Let us remember that the Latin language was beginning to prevail in the leading cities at least about the year 250 — about this time the popes in Rome begin to word the memorial inscriptions of their predecessors in Latin — and that thus through the course of at least 120 years the popular language and that of the liturgy had parted company.

In other words, there existed then already that cleft between the language of the people and that of the official worship which many today deplore as a fateful occurrence, while others regard it as providential inasmuch as a non-vernacular or foreign tongue emphasizes all the more the mystery character of the liturgy. It is very instructive, therefore, to observe that the ancient Church did not allow this division to continue for a long time. The Greek, though it was the liturgical language of the time of the apostles and the martyrs, was definitely abandoned in favor of the language of the people.

As the contemporary statements of Ambrosiaster (*P. L.* 17, 269) clearly show, the Church thus recognized and acted on the principle voiced by St. Paul. For he had declared, in reference to those of the faithful endowed with charismatic gifts, that the liturgical prayer should be understood by all the congregation; for all should make the prayer their own and so be able to express their assent to it by their word "Amen" and to derive edification therefrom. "I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, but I will sing with the understanding also. Else if thou givest praise with the spirit alone, how shall he who fills the place of the uninstructed say 'Amen' to thy thanksgiving? For he does not know what thou sayest. For thou indeed givest thanks well, but the other is not edified" (1 Cor. 14:16-17).

In our days, when the problem of the vernacular is so much discussed, these facts should be kept in mind. We follow the example of the classical era of the liturgy when we maintain the principle that the liturgy should be intelligible in

some measure to simple people, and above all in the parts which are intended for their instruction.

### 3) Mystery-Doctrine

Throughout the Greek text of Hippolytus and to an even greater extent in the Latin text of the Leonine Sacramentary and similar collections, there occur again and again expressions which philologists recognize as common to the ancient pagan mystery-cults — words such as *mysterium*, *actio*, *memoria*, *illuminatio*, *invocatio*, and their Greek equivalents. Hence the question: did these expressions, when taken over into the Christian liturgy, retain the concrete meaning which they had in the ancient pagan cults; or were they given in the moment of adoption a new and more abstract and spiritual meaning?

Or, to clarify the question by adducing an example, does the word *mysterium* in the early Christian texts have the meaning of a secret or mysterious truth, or did it retain the ancient meaning of a "mystery-deed," a sacred cult action, an act of consecration?

Odo Casel has explored this question in many studies chiefly of philological character and has concluded that the said expressions retained their established meanings even when employed in the Christian liturgy. His conclusion from these philological studies is that the authors or creators of the Roman liturgy regarded the eucharistic Sacrifice and the sacraments as mystery-deeds in the customary ancient sense, that is, as sacred acts which beneath the veil of sacramental signs make present our Lord's redeeming work in a mystical but real presence. He has striven to show by close examination of the traditional evidence that this conception was not merely a theory that was held for a time in the third and fourth centuries but was rather the general conviction of the Church from the time of St. Paul to that of thirteenth century scholasticism.

The product of Casel's research work has not yet won general approval. His opponents thus far have argued that he has not presented a satisfying speculative, that is, rationally intelligible explanation of his Mystery-doctrine.

But it must be remembered that the immediate problem is not the speculative one as to the Mystery-doctrine as such (a matter which meanwhile has engaged the efforts of Gottlieb

Söhngen). The problem is primarily a factual one, to be solved largely with philological means: namely, whether the ancient Church did or did not have this understanding of the eucharistic Sacrifice and the sacraments. And as to that, in my opinion the case stands thus: It does seem that the understanding of these liturgical acts as mystery-deeds is clearly demonstrable in certain ecclesiastical regions, particularly eastern ones, and in the writings of some of the Fathers; but that other regions, and notably the region about Rome, seem to show only occasional evidence of it.

Hence it may perhaps be safe to say that the Mystery-doctrine is not more than an attempt at theological explanation, introduced indeed by St. Paul, and which by the increasing number of converts who had grown to adult years in the experience of the pagan mystery-cults did find a goodly number of adherents in certain times and places without becoming the general and common doctrine of the Church.

Despite this modification of Casel's conclusions, one must recognize with gratitude that he has restored the full ancient meaning of many of the terms, phrases and rites of the liturgy, that he has furnished us with a new and more organic comprehension of the liturgy of the sacraments, and that he has stimulated and aroused renewed activity in the field of theology.

### 4) The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer

Good result has come also from the research work of Fr. Joseph Andreas Jungmann, S.J., in regard to the place of Christ in liturgical prayer. It had long been known that the Mass-prayers in the ancient liturgy were nearly always addressed to God the Father while Christ our Lord appears in them in His role of mediator (*Deus qui . . . ; per Dominum nostrum . . .*), whereas in the formulas of medieval and modern composition the address is usually to our Lord (*Domine Jesu Christe . . .*). But the date and the circumstances of this change of attitude had not been determined.

Jungmann has now adduced convincing proof, after careful comparison of all the pertinent liturgical texts, that it was the Arian controversy of the fourth century which prompted the change. For this controversy brought about gradually an increased emphasis on the divinity of Christ and consequently a lesser emphasis on the dogma of His high-priestly

mediatorship which our Lord Himself and St. Paul had stressed, a fundamental truth of Christian faith which today again needs renewed attention.

### 5) Liturgical Insignia and Ceremonial

The research work of the modern period had produced but little new evidence in regard to the introduction of *liturgical insignia* and to the origin of the *ceremonial* of the solemn high Mass and of the pontifical rites.

The oldest ritual directions, the so-called Roman *Ordines*, are not older than the second half of the seventh century, and in them we find the development already well advanced, and indeed quite concluded if we consider only the process as its results appear in the capital city of Rome. We do not find in these *Ordines* any answer to the question as to when the genuflection before the bishop, the kissing of the foot or hand, the use of throne and incense and processional candles were introduced into the liturgy, nor when the bishop or priest began to use distinctive vestments and insignia such as the ring, the pallium, the maniple and the stole.

More recently however the Hungarian expert in ancient history, Andreas Alföldi, has furnished us for the first time with a thorough description of the development of the royal ceremonial of the Roman imperial court. And it is surprising to find how close is the relationship between the Roman-Byzantine court ceremonial and the rite of the papal Mass of the seventh century, which is maintained in the pontifical Mass today and in a modified form in our solemn high Mass. The resemblance is so pronounced that one may consider it quite certain that honorary privileges and ceremonial customary at the imperial court and proper to higher state officials were at some time extended to bishops and others of the clergy and thus made entrance into the liturgy.

It is more difficult to determine just how this came about in particular instances. Certainly it was initiated by the alliance of the Empire with the Church after Constantine. For thereafter the imperial court accorded to bishops and deacons recognized place within the civil hierarchy, with right to the honors and insignia which were proper to such stations. Since the bishops were now ranked with the highest of the civil officials, they had the right to various marks of honor, such as the throne, lights, incense, the maniple and

the kissing of the hand; and since the Pope of Rome was likened in rank to the Emperor he had the right to the wearing of a ring, to be saluted by the genuflection and the kissing of the foot, and his picture might be set up in the official buildings, that is, in the churches.

It was left to the Church, of course, to decide if or in what measure these customs of secular life should be adopted in the spiritual sphere by ecclesiastical personages. When in the third century Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch and at the same time holder of high civil office, introduced in his cathedral "a stage (*bema*) with an imposing throne" and in his episcopal residence "an audience room like those of civil officials," he thereby gave great offense to his fellow-bishops (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 7, 30, 9). But when at the beginning of the fourth century such marks of honor were accorded to bishops generally by the imperial government the attitude underwent a change; no doubt it was now thought that the authority of high churchmen would command more respect if enhanced by the customary civil insignia and ceremonial.

This new insight into the secular origin of these external elements in the liturgy might well prevent us from attaching too much importance to these things. For not rarely does it seem that over-emphasis of such externals distracts the mind of the faithful from the sublime interior values of the liturgy.

### 6) Genius of the Roman Rite

Finally, let it be observed that research in regard to this ancient period has enabled us to recognize certain distinctive characteristics of the Roman liturgy. In contrast to the style of modern prayer with its tendency toward individualism and subjectivism and its preference for more abstract and logically consecutive modes of thought, the ancient liturgy has objective character, it prefers to be concrete, and its mode of thought is one that may perhaps most aptly be called contemplative.

## II.

### FROM GREGORY THE GREAT TO GREGORY VII: FRANCO-GERMANIC INITIATIVE

In regard to this second period in the history of the Roman liturgy—from 590 to 1073—our scholarship down to the year 1914 had given us only meager and vague information. What was said in general was somewhat as follows:

The development of the Roman liturgy was brought by Pope Gregory the Great to a certain termination; this found expression in the Gregorian Sacramentary, the Gregorian Antiphonary, the Roman *Ordines* and other collections. With some additional modifications by Pope Hadrian I at the end of the eighth century, this Roman liturgy was adopted first in England and then, under Charlemagne, in the Franco-Germanic empire. In the latter territory it came into contact with what remained of the ancient Gallican liturgy and with an older Roman form, designated as that of Pope Gelasius, which had spread north of the Alps already in the sixth or at the beginning of the seventh century.

The competition of these traditions, Gallican, Gelasian and Gregorian, finally resulted in a fusion of the three, and many elements of this composite came to be introduced in Rome about or shortly after the year 1000. No further constructive work in the development of the Roman liturgy is apparent in this period.

Characteristic of its spirit is the fondness for the allegorical method of explaining the liturgical rites and texts, which method now sets out from the Frankish kingdom on its course of conquest. And meanwhile new tendencies appear in popular piety as the passion of Christ and His eucharistic presence appeal increasingly to Christian devotion.

#### 1) Gregory and the "Prayer of the Faithful"

The research work of recent years has found evidences which show that a definite purpose of Gregory the Great in his revision and organization of the liturgical legacy of the preceding centuries was to abridge what had grown too lengthy and so lighten a burden which placed a strain upon the devotion of the faithful.

If the evidence is trustworthy, this abridging process of Pope Gregory caused the loss to the Roman liturgy of one notable element, a regrettable loss in my opinion, namely, that of the great intercessory prayer. In order to explain what I mean and to justify my statement let us consider briefly the history of this prayer.

In Rome as elsewhere the Fore-Mass ended with the dismissal of the catechumens; at the sacrificial part of the service, offertory, Consecration and Communion, only the baptized, "the faithful," were allowed to assist. But immediately before the offertory procession the assembled faithful joined in a prayer for the needs of the community. This is the prayer which our sources call the *oratio fidelium*, the prayer of the faithful.

This prayer had in Rome an invariable form. The leader of the service first invited those present, in a formula the main lines of which were always identical, to join with him in prayer to God for a designated intention. Thus for example: "Let us pray, dearly beloved, for the holy Church of God; that our God and Lord may be pleased to grant it peace, to keep it in unity and to preserve it throughout the world, subjecting to it principalities and powers; and may He grant us, while we live in peace and tranquility, grace to glorify God, the Father almighty. Let us pray."

Upon this invitation of the leader the congregation spent some time in silent prayer. Then the celebrant again spoke aloud and in a brief formula summed up the content of their prayer, the congregation meanwhile following his words with outstretched arms (in the *orante* attitude) and at the end expressing their accord with the word "Amen."

In this way prayers were offered consecutively for the various needs of the community, for the hierarchy, the confessors, the virgins and widows, for the civil ruler, for the catechumens, for those in illness and distress, for heretics and schismatics, for Jews and pagans. On penitential days the congregation knelt during their silent prayer and arose for the final summary prayer. The deacon gave the signals which called for these attitudes: "*Flectamus genua* — Let us kneel," and: "*Levate* — Arise."

It is true no doubt that this method did produce a desirable combination of silent personal prayer and of vocal community prayer. But it had the disadvantage that it was some-



what elaborate and might become tiresome by frequent repetition.

In the East, and under eastern influence also in Gaul and in upper Italy, the intercessory prayer had a shorter form. The deacon pronounced the intercession in a very concise way and the congregation responded with a *Kyrie eleison*. Thus for example, the deacon called out: "For the immaculate Church of the living God throughout the whole world we implore the fulness of divine blessing," and the people replied: "*Kyrie eleison*." This method has come down to us as the form of our litanies. Its advantage lies in the fact that it combines brevity of speech, clarity of thought and an enlivening rhythm.

This eastern form of the intercessory prayer appealed to Pope Gelasius I. He took it over, as Abbot Bernard Capelle has shown with fine perception, and introduced it into the Latin Mass in place of the older Roman form. And it was probably at this time that the location of this prayer in the service was changed; instead of coming immediately before the offertory, it was now placed at the beginning of the Fore-Mass, or the Mass of the catechumens.

It consequently also ceased to be a "prayer of the faithful." Only on two days of Holy Week did Pope Gelasius retain the older custom; for on Wednesday and Friday of Holy Week the eucharistic service began as formerly directly with the readings, and only after these did the intercessory prayer follow in the traditional Roman manner.

We find here a good example of an important law that should govern the process of liturgical development, one which Anton Baumstark has called "the law which bids us honor the tradition of a classic period in the history of the liturgy." Outside of Holy Week, on all days of the year, there remains to the present day (and this time no doubt without relation to the intentions of Pope Gelasius) a faint trace of the ancient Roman custom, namely, the strange *Oremus* immediately before the offertory, an *Oremus* without a following prayer.

It was the Gelasian form of the intercessory prayer which Pope Gregory the Great altered in his work of abridgment. He did away with the part of the deacon as leader of the prayer and he retained only a vestige of the people's part in the *Kyrie eleison*. But on Saturday of Holy Week the ancient custom was substantially retained, again according to the

aforesaid law; for to the present day the Mass of Holy Saturday begins with a complete litany.

It may be that in regard to this omission of the intercessory prayer any hesitation at the time of Pope Gregory was overcome by the thought that sufficient attention to the various needs and desires of the community was given within the Canon of the Mass. But the intercessions contained in the Canon are expressed in very general terms; and because of the inviolable character of the Canon text they cannot easily be applied to particular circumstantial needs; and finally they allow no direct voice on the part of the congregation. Therefore they could not give satisfaction for any great length of time.

This is evident from what came about in subsequent years. We may observe how it became customary, and it still is customary in some parishes, to introduce in the Sunday service, either before or after the sermon, a "universal prayer" for various necessities which is not in the official liturgy and which is recited in the popular language. In Requiem Masses it is the practice in some places to introduce before the offertory vernacular prayers applied by name to the person deceased. And finally, in times of special need prayers in the vernacular for particular purposes are added at the end of the Mass in order to express the desires which the people have or should have at heart.

Let us recognize therefore a matter of grave concern which deserves attention in future reforms of our liturgy: the Fore-Mass should again take fuller cognizance of the sentiments present at the moment in the minds and hearts of the people, their anxieties, their hopes, their joys; provision should be made for them, as formerly in the intercessory prayer, "the prayer of the faithful."

## 2) Fusion of Roman and Frankish Liturgies

The research work of the past thirty or so years, especially in regard to the old sacramentaries, has greatly increased and clarified our knowledge regarding the geographical extension of the Roman liturgy and the active contribution of Franco-Germanic influence in its further development.

We know now (as I was able to prove in an earlier writing) that it was not Charlemagne but rather his father *Pepin* who by royal edict first made the Gregorian liturgy of obligation

SISTERS OF THE SOVEREIGN ORDER  
17 OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM

in his kingdom: on the occasion of his coronation in the presence of the then reigning Pope in the year 754. This measure, which was intended to bring to an end the diversities in liturgical custom and the now more than century old rivalry between the Roman and Gallican liturgies, did not in fact achieve its purpose, primarily because of technical difficulties. Instead of a uniform Mass-text presenting the latest Gregorian form of the Roman liturgy, there came into circulation a modified form which was a fusion of the Gelasian and Gregorian along with some elements of the old Gallican.

Charlemagne undertook again to oblige the churches of his kingdom to adopt the pure Roman Gregorian liturgy, and in this effort he secured for his palace library authentic copies of the Roman liturgical books (which in fact, as I have proven in detail, were imperfect copies by reason of flaws in the Roman text), and these were to serve as standard for the usage of his kingdom.

But Charlemagne was obliged to recognize that his people would not rest satisfied with the purely Roman liturgy and that it would be necessary to retain certain long customary feasts, rites and prayer formulas. Hence, sometime before the year 800, he ordered the composition of an appendix to the Roman Mass-book, containing these various customary and popular elements, which was to be used alongside the Roman missal but to be kept strictly distinct from it.

The churches of the Frankish kingdom did not continue long to observe this prescription. Nevertheless Charlemagne did succeed in establishing the Gregorian liturgy as the norm and standard throughout his kingdom.

From the end of the ninth century the whole state of affairs in Rome was notoriously one of extreme disorder. All understanding and appreciation of the liturgy seemed on the way to disappear. The secretariates for the copying of the liturgical books were closed. The liturgical life of the eternal city might perhaps have been brought to a complete standstill had it not been for the *Cluniac monasteries*, lately established in Rome, where it was faithfully maintained. It is due chiefly to the work of these monks and to the Roman expeditions of the *Ottoman emperors* that by the end of the tenth century the Roman-Frankish liturgical texts were to be found throughout all Italy and above all in Rome.

Thus it may be said that in this critical time it was the

Franco-Germanic influence which saved the Roman liturgy for Rome and for the world.

### 3) Franco-Germanic Influence

But more than that. The Franco-Germanic influence also enriched the Roman liturgy in important ways. The opinion once common, that the constructive work was complete in all essentials by the end of the sixth century, has in recent years been shown to be erroneous. A pause did indeed occur in Rome after the work accomplished by Pope Gregory the Great. A few new feasts were added to the calendar; under eastern influence the *Agnus Dei* was introduced into the liturgy of the Mass, and the *Improperia* in the service of Good Friday.

But there was lacking the vision and initiative for further effort, notably for the organization of the post-pentecostal part of the liturgical year and for an organic development of the liturgy of the sacraments.

The case was otherwise in the Franco-Germanic territory; for here, from the eighth to the tenth century, there was distinct vitality and creative activity. It was formerly supposed that the solemn anointings in the ordinations of the clergy, the imposing rite for the consecration of churches with its rich symbolism, the splendid and dramatic liturgy of Palm Sunday and Holy Week, were in the main originally features of the old Roman liturgy. This opinion has been shown to be quite erroneous.

We know now that of the sacramental rites only that of baptism has the major part of its rich ritual from early Christian Roman origin. The ritual structure of all the other sacraments and the sacramentals as we have them today is the result of Franco-Germanic creative activity, although indeed based upon very ancient sources including eastern ones. The same is true, as Abbot Bernard Capelle and Anton Baumstark have demonstrated, of the liturgy of Palm Sunday and of Holy Week. The great regret is that the gifted liturgists of the Frankish kingdom did not achieve also the organization of a proper of the time for the post-pentecostal season.

The old Roman liturgy was in general almost puritanic in its simplicity and brevity. Greater depth of emotion, greater wealth of language and symbolism, and a certain amplitude

of treatment — all this, except in the case of baptism, was contributed by the Germanic and Celtic clergy of the Carolingian empire. Edmund Bishop has furnished us with a comparative analysis of the characteristic styles of the Roman and the Gallo-Frankish liturgies. His essay, "The Genius of the Roman Rite," a recognized classic, remains a work of great value, especially in its French version with commentary by André Wilmart.

It was the clergy of the diocese of Mainz, as Michel Andrieu has taught us, who eventually, about the year 950, united the older and newer rites in a skillfully edited text which soon prevailed throughout the West and even in the capital city of Rome. The work of these men persists to the present day in our Pontifical and Ritual.

#### 4) Roman Developments

It has been said above that in Rome too, after the time of Gregory the Great and in the seventh and eighth centuries, some elements were added in the structure of the Roman liturgy, at least in the calendar of the liturgical year.

Notable especially is the introduction of our four most ancient feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, all appearing in the Roman calendar between the years 609 and 687. They are, in the order of their establishment: the feast of the dedication of the church of St. Mary of the Martyrs (May 14), and those of the Assumption (August 15), the Purification (February 2) and the Annunciation (March 25). The first of these four has a local significance. The other three were taken over from the East where they were observed, as may be proven, from about the end of the fifth century. It is probable also that the name of the Blessed Mother was not added in the Canon of the Mass until the same seventh century.

When one considers that these tributes to Mary were due to the action not, as it seems, of popes who were native in the West but of the three popes of the seventh century who were of Syrian origin, there is clear evidence here of another characteristic of the Roman liturgy: its strict adherence to ancient tradition. For certainly an extreme conservatism is apparent in the fact that the Roman liturgy, in contrast to that of the East and that of the Gallican West, did not have feasts honoring the Mother of God until some two hundred years after the Council of Ephesus (431).

### III.

#### FROM GREGORY VII TO TRENT: GENERAL UNIFORMITY

Regarding this third period in the history of the Roman liturgy, which for our purpose we reckon from 1073 to 1545, it was customary *thirty years ago* to say about as follows:

From the pontificate of Gregory VII the papacy resumes leadership in the sphere of the liturgy. The bishoprics of the West are expected to conform to the liturgical practice of the Roman See and to observe the papal liturgical regulations. Certainly this plan would not have been carried out so successfully had not the Franciscan order come into being; for the Franciscans proved to be missionary apostles of the Roman liturgy. Moved principally by practical considerations, they adopted the missal and breviary of the papal curia and through the influence of their itinerant preachers these convenient papal texts became known everywhere.

Thus a certain uniformity, not only in regard to liturgical theory but also in actual practice, came to prevail in all the western countries, and hence there came about gradually a condition which made it possible for the Council of Trent to undertake the official promulgation of uniform liturgical books for the entire Church in the West.

Notable in the history of the liturgy in this period is the fact that Communion was no longer administered under both species; that the understanding of the eucharistic Sacrifice and of the intimate relationship of Sacrifice and Communion gradually grew less; that devotion tended to center upon the sacred Humanity of our Lord and that religious individualism sought more and more to satisfy its devotional needs in practices outside the liturgy.

The *research work of recent years* has not found it necessary to make any great alterations in the foregoing sketch of this period; but the outline of it may be made more distinct in several respects. Four particular points may be considered here.

##### 1) The Silent Canon

The first of these points is that regarding the Canon of the Mass. In the ancient Church, leadership in the liturgical action and the pronouncing of the formulas of Consecration and of sacramental administration were of course the func-

tion of the bishop or of a priest acting as his representative. But the participation of the people in the prayer and in the action was never disregarded.

It was understood that the people should be able to follow both prayer and action in all detail, and not merely as attentive spectators but as active participants. Therefore the prayers were spoken aloud, the Canon of the Mass and the words of Consecration being no exception. The people signified their union with the bishop and their assent to the words of the Canon as spoken by him with their solemn "Amen," the Amen which is still maintained at the end of the Canon immediately before the *Pater noster*.

It is plain therefore that the transition to a silent recitation of the sacrificial prayers was an event of grave moment. The bond uniting priest and people was severed at a point which is the very heart of the liturgy. The capital portion of the sacrificial service thus became the exclusive concern of the bishop or priest and the people were reduced to the role of passive spectators; and if they might be excluded in this way from the central part of the holy Sacrifice, why not also restrict or omit their active cooperation in other parts of the liturgy, for it often dragged and tended to retard the course of the service?

Thus, evidently, a beginning was made which would lead to grave consequences. The further history shows that the way thus begun has been followed out logically to its end.

Can we determine when it was that the first decision was made in this matter? One might assume that it happened at the time when an influx of converts who had formerly been adherents of the pagan mystery-cults brought with them ideas and rites customary in these cults; and when the "discipline of the secret" and the terminology of the mystery-cults became customary in the Church — that is to say, in the fourth century.

Closer investigation of the problem shows that this supposition does correspond to facts so far as the East is concerned, but that the Church of Rome, more conservative and less receptive to the mystery-concepts, maintained the practice of loud recitation of the Canon until the end of the ancient epoch. It was first of all in regions where the Roman liturgy had experienced eastern influences, in the Gallican territory therefore, and at some time in the seventh century, that the transition to silent recitation of the Canon occurred. Josef Andreas Jungmann has undertaken to bring new light

upon this question, without however reaching a definite conclusion.

## 2) The Altar

A second point in the scope of recent research which may be mentioned here is that regarding the altar. It is well known that in the ancient Christian basilicas the arrangement of the altar was such that the celebrant faced toward the people. This is still the case in some of the churches in Rome such as the Lateran and St. Clement's.

Moreover, the altar of the old Roman basilicas had no ledge for candelabra and no retablo or tabernacle. It was a simple but massive table of stone. The paintings in the lower church of St. Clement in Rome which date from the end of the eleventh century show that at that time not even the candles which are prescribed today and the equally prescribed crucifix appeared upon the altar. The altar bore only the altar cloths, the sacred vessels, the paten and the Mass-book.

Thus there was nothing to distract the eyes of the faithful from what was essential, the offering of the holy Sacrifice, nothing to hinder the plain view by the people as they followed the sacred action which went on freely and un concealed.

There used to be considerable discussion about when precisely the decisive change took place which led to present practices: when, e.g., was the priest relegated to the front, i.e., the people's side of the altar; when was the retablo added; and finally when were candles and crucifix placed upon the altar? All these questions have been answered, now for some time, through the research work of Joseph Braun in which he has displayed remarkable erudition.

Thus we know that the position of the priest with his back to the people became the general rule outside of Rome about the year 1000; the placing of the altar against the rear wall and the addition of the retablo followed soon after; but candles were not placed upon the altar until after 1100, and the crucifix probably in the thirteenth century when special devotion to the passion of our Lord began its increase.

We may therefore conclude from what has been said that these changes concerning the altar came about approximately at the time when the holy Sacrifice itself had come to be regarded as more or less the exclusive action of the priest. And it is likewise true that a consequence of these outward



changes was the general formation of inward attitudes which on the whole are regrettable.

Fortunately in recent years a better understanding of the proper significance and function of the altar has come to be quite general; in newly built churches the altar is given again the position of prominence which it deserves; its form as a table of sacrifice is again emphasized; and it is no longer burdened with theatrical and distracting frippery of superstructures and lace drapery. Perhaps we may hope that the final result of this present tendency will be the restoration of the altar to its original free-standing position and the disappearance of the unfortunate necessity which obliges the priest to turn about when he addresses the people in the *Dominus vobiscum*.

### 3) The Offertory Procession

A third point which may be selected from the results of recent research work is that regarding the offertory procession. Throughout Christian antiquity the faithful were accustomed at every celebration of the holy Sacrifice to bring offertory gifts to the altar or to the chancel. These were in part gifts which could serve for the holy Sacrifice itself or for other liturgical use, such as bread, wine, oil or wax; and in other part they were gifts serving for the maintenance of the clergy and for the charity works of the Christian community.

However, all these gifts were regarded and intended as symbolic expression of the union of all the faithful in the offering of the holy Sacrifice, while at the same time they served to ground the virtue of fraternal charity in this central act of worship.

The obligation to take part in this so-called offertory procession was still urged in ecclesiastical synods as late as the eleventh century, after which time these admonitions of the bishops are no longer heard. For when once the understanding of the Mass as the united offering of all was no longer well grasped, when the Mass was regarded as the action of the priest alone, the offertory procession had lost the very reason in which it was founded.

All that remains of it today is the collection which is taken up at Mass-time, whether for the poor or for the needs of the church. Moreover we dispense with any processional form of offering; an usher or an altar-boy with plate or basket collects the donations of the people; the priest at the altar gives no

attention to this but proceeds without interruption in the course of the Mass.

Recent studies, which however are not yet complete, seem to prove that this disappearance of the offertory procession may be dated at sometime about the year 1200. Today it is only in the rite for the consecration of a bishop and in the analogous blessing of an abbot that we retain a solemn offertory procession in a reduced form.

Surprising therefore is the fact that at the end of the fourteenth century (as I have shown in my contribution to the testimonial volume offered to Abbot Herwegen) the offertory procession with all the colorful character which it had in antiquity was revived as part of the ceremony for the canonization of saints. Did these men of the papal court of that time who fashioned the ceremony consider the offertory procession only as a feature which would add to the splendor of the rite of canonization? Or did they have in mind the symbolism of the offertory gifts? Or did they wish to restore to general observance, using the rite of canonization as an opening wedge, an almost gone and forgotten practice which nevertheless they regarded as a precious feature of the ancient Christian liturgy? These are questions which for the present must be left unanswered.

### 4) Genuflection

The last point to be mentioned here is that regarding the genuflection. In the ancient world kneeling was an attitude expressing a sense of guilt; it was an attitude of petition; and above all it was an attitude of adoration. In this last named sense it was the customary pagan sign of salutation before the image of a deity and before the deified emperor and his image. For this reason Christians in the persecution period refused to take part in the pagan sacrifices or to genuflect before the likeness of the emperor; for they could not render such adoration.

By the middle of the third century, however, this gesture had become so routine and devoid of meaning that in extensive circles of Roman society it was no longer regarded as a sign of adoration. Therefore the imperial government declared officially in the year 275 that the genuflection was no longer a feature of the pagan religion but rather an expression of loyalty and civil homage as one of the *Romanae caeremoniae*.

But it was not until the reign of Constantine that the Church ventured to draw practical conclusions from this new conception. From then on the Church did not hesitate to permit the genuflection as a sign of homage before the emperor and before his image. The faithful were furthermore encouraged to show honor in the same way to sacred objects which were not objects of adoration, such as altars and the relics and images of the saints. And finally the genuflection accorded to the emperor was also allowed as a mark of honor due properly to bishops.

Thereafter in the liturgy of the West the genuflection or the kneeling attitude was not only a sign of contrition and petition but was also customary as an expression of reverence before the altar, the relic of the holy Cross, the crucifix, and before the bishop.

An then rather suddenly in the eleventh century the genuflection took on again, in addition to the meanings which it now had, the meaning of adoration. The occasion for this was the denial by Berengar of Tours of eucharistic transubstantiation. The Church thus saw it necessary to emphasize more than formerly the real presence of the God-man beneath the eucharistic appearances. From that time it became customary, as Fr. Peter Browe, S.J., has proved, to genuflect before receiving holy Communion. This genuflection before the real presence of our Lord was evidently a sign of adoration.

In this way the gesture again acquired a significance similar to that which it had lost at the end of pagan times. From this time on the genuflection or the kneeling attitude appears in the liturgy with these several meanings: in eucharistic worship it is a sign of adoration, in all other cases it is, as formerly, a sign of veneration, of contrition or of petition.

A certain difficulty appears as a consequence in the instruction of the people. For since people are so accustomed from early years to practices of eucharistic adoration and to regard the genuflection as an expression of humble and devout adoration in the divine presence, it is not easy to explain to a congregation that the genuflection before the altar apart from the tabernacle or before the bishop has a different meaning. Is it then perhaps advisable to restrict the meaning of this gesture to that which it has acquired since the eleventh century and to express with a simple bow our homage to the altar apart from the tabernacle and before the bishop?

## IV.

## FROM TRENT TO TODAY: ERA OF CODIFIED LITURGY AND RUBRICAL RULE

This fourth and last period in the history of the Roman liturgy extends from the time of the Council of Trent to the present day. The *research work anterior to the year 1914* would say of this period about as follows:

The liturgy as codified by order of the Council of Trent (the Breviary published in 1568 and the Missal in 1570) was gradually introduced in all countries of the West and without any great difficulty. The dioceses of northwestern Germany and those of France, the latest ones to submit, conformed to the Roman usage in the course of the nineteenth century. The Congregation of Rites, established in 1588 as the paramount authority in matters liturgical, is concerned to assure, by its authoritative interpretation of liturgical law and by its supervision of liturgical practice, the uniform observance of this codified liturgy. Thenceforth the rubricist, the expert in liturgical law, is a leading figure in the sphere of the liturgy, a circumstance which gives a distinctive character to this entire period.

The devotional life of the period shows the influence of the liturgy only in a very limited measure; it is influenced rather by the increase of devotion to the eucharistic Christ and to His Sacred Heart and to the Blessed Virgin Mary and also by the practices of discursive prayer or meditation. It is true that in the years of the so-called enlightenment and of the romantic movement some efforts were made to lead the people back to intelligent participation in the liturgy; but these efforts had no widespread nor lasting effect. It was only after the renewal of energy within the Benedictine Order, in the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially after the reforms of Pope Pius X, that there came a thoroughgoing return back to liturgical life.

The studies that have been made in recent years have found that this foregoing sketch of the modern period is correct enough except in a few points; but they have broadened and deepened our knowledge in many respects. Let us consider here a few especially significant examples.

### 1) Eucharistic Ceremonial

It was formerly assumed that the ceremonial observed today in the cult of the Sacrament of the Altar, notably the exposition of the monstrance upon a throne, the use of a canopy in eucharistic processions, and a complicated system of reverential practices, had originated in the middle ages in the eucharistic movement of that time.

It is true that some of these customs are apparent in the middle ages here and there, but they were not generally adopted until the sixteenth century, that is, at the beginning of our present period. And this came about, as Joseph Kramp was the first to point out, influenced by the thought that the eucharistic Christ is the King of Kings and that hence there is due to Him the ceremonial honors and especially the royal pomp that was customary in the courts of the sixteenth century monarchies.

The ideas which form the background of this course of thought are subject for further investigation and are to be discovered no doubt by a study of the mentality peculiar to the Baroque period. That they still persist in the romance countries is apparent, for example, in the Italian organization of the "Pages of the Blessed Sacrament," a group of boys who surround the altar on solemn occasions clad in a Spanish costume of white satin and even equipped with little swords.

This is a second instance in history, as the reader will recall, where the etiquette of the secular court has determined liturgical custom. Only, in the first case it was in order to accord honor to bishops and the clergy, but now it is to do homage to our Lord present in the holy Eucharist.

### 2) Mass Before the Exposed Blessed Sacrament

We are indebted to Fr. Peter Browe for more accurate information regarding the origin of modern eucharistic devotions and of the corresponding practice of Mass accompanied by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. As Browe has shown in thorough studies, ably seconded by the French writer, Dumoutet, these new forms of eucharistic devotion were due ultimately to the fact that from the time of the waning middle ages the faithful were strongly and increasingly attracted to the mere beholding of the Blessed Sacrament: it was thought that mere vision was a source of extraordinary grace.

The dioceses of Germany took the lead in advocating

these new practices of piety. Thus one of the popes of the sixteenth century speaks explicitly of such exposition of the Blessed Sacrament as a German custom. In the time of the Counter-reformation the Jesuits especially propagated these devotions and certainly with remarkable effect among the people.

But the Roman curia has always maintained a reserved attitude, especially in regard to the Mass accompanied by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament—another example of that conservatism in matters of liturgy which from of old has been its grand distinction. The Roman curia has thus, at least in the case of the Mass with exposition, shown its more profound understanding of the nature of our liturgical services. For who today would wish seriously to advocate this duplication which occurs when attention is divided between the offering of the holy Sacrifice and adoration of the eucharistic Christ enthroned in the monstrance?

### 3) Principles of Liturgical Reform

Some years ago the students in a seminar which I was conducting discovered a very noteworthy fact about the reformed calendar issued in 1568 and 1570 by the committee of the Council of Trent. Two of the members of our seminar, Ernst Focke (a war victim in Russia) and Hans Heinrichs, gave further study to this topic and their conclusions were published in a dissertation in the year 1939.

We have here precise proof that when the Tridentine committee in its reform of the calendar reduced the surplus of feasts which through the preceding centuries had overloaded the liturgical year, they acted on the principle that the feasts which had been observed in Rome itself from a date anterior to the eleventh century were to be retained, while of those later in origin only a few were to remain, and of these not one was of German origin.

We may recognize here two determining principles which appear to have been in the mind of the Tridentine committee. The first of these is expressed in the rule that Roman liturgy is to be understood as meaning the liturgical usage of the city of Rome, as bound up with local Roman saints and churches, and the desire of the committee is that this usage be restored to the calendar insofar as it had been lost. The second principle seems to be that the early centuries are regarded as the standard or more ideal period in the history

of the liturgy, so that what came later was in many instances a rank growth which may and should be pruned away.

As to the first of these principles, it seems that the supreme authority in the Church no longer insists upon it in all its scope. The period of absolute uniformity, in the sense of conformity to the local usage of the city of Rome, is no doubt ended. The saints of the various countries again find larger representation in the calendar of the liturgical year. And local liturgical traditions in regard to the administration of the sacraments may now expect a more generous recognition.

The second of these principles in the mind of the Tridentine committee, namely that in regard to the liturgy the earlier centuries rank higher than the later ones, is however of fundamental importance. For there is no little stir of feeling over the question as to how far one may actually go in speaking of faulty developments in the history of the liturgy, lest one come into conflict with an essential point of doctrine, namely with the dogma of the divine guidance of the Church by the Holy Spirit which excludes any decisive error. One asks if the oft-repeated cry: "Back to the origins of the liturgy of the ancient Church," does not go well beyond the limit of what is permissible. For the solution of this acute problem, the attitude of the Tridentine commission presents a contribution which is of no slight importance.

#### 4) Letter or Spirit

Differences now and then between Roman regulations and local practices have called the attention of liturgists to the fact that rubricists may in certain circumstances (not so intending but simply under the pressure of a method too closely bound to the given situation) cause a prescription of the liturgy to be derived from its original meaning into a contrary one, and perhaps even to be thus permanently established. Sometimes, of course, opposite customs will correct such decisions of the rubricists. Let us observe here two examples.

The ancient mosaics, such as the splendid company of Dalmatian saints in the church of St. Venantius in Rome, show us how impressive the principal liturgical vestments, the chasuble and the dalmatic, appeared in ancient times. The chasuble, the liturgical garment of the bishop and of his representatives, the priests, was a bell-shaped costume reaching to the feet, of light weight and usually of dark-colored

material, which was gathered up on both sides so that the movement of hands and lower arms was left free. In contrast to this the dalmatic, the garb of the deacons and sub-deacons, was a full-cut white tunic with wide sleeves, similar in cut to the present day cowl or choir garb of the Benedictines.

These two types of garment can hardly be surpassed in beauty and dignity: in my opinion they rank among the classic creations of human handiwork of all ages. The chasuble, with its free-flowing folds, falling in oval lines, and deep-toned in its hue, accentuated the figure of the venerable and priestly shepherd of the flock; while the dalmatic with its lighter color, its folds in simple vertical lines, its sleeves adapted to easy action, correspond well to the service function of his more youthful assistants.

From the studies of Fr. Joseph Braun, S.J., we learn that, despite various changes in color, material and decoration, the chasuble and dalmatic retained their main original features for hundreds of years — until the Baroque period, with its characteristic and astonishing self-confidence, proceeded with its usual ruthlessness to alter in a radical way the structure of these two garments. Until then they had been really garments; now they became ornaments, gorgeous and rigid ornaments which hung like scapulars from breast and shoulders.

And since this inferior Baroque form of chasuble and dalmatic was in vogue in the period of the liturgy's codification and also corresponded in style with the many Baroque churches in Rome, the rubricists had no hesitation in declaring it to be the standard form. And so it comes about that there is a decree of the Congregation of Rites of December 9, 1925, which states that "Gothic chasubles" (a name mistakenly applied to the former pre-Baroque form of the chasuble) are not in accord with the mind of the Congregation.

Let us consider another example. From primitive Christian times the beginning of the great eucharistic prayer (which we call the preface) ended in a reference to the hymn of divine praise chanted in heaven by the angelic hosts. At this point the assembled faithful, in Rome from the third century, interrupted the solemn prayer of the celebrant and interposed the chant of the *Sanctus*, the song of the angels found already in the Old Testament and in the liturgy of the Jewish synagogue. The bishop, or priest, waited until the end of this



hymn of praise, and then continued, aloud, as we have seen, with his chanting of the Canon.

But gradually the fact came to be overlooked that the two parts of the Canon, the preface and the body of the prayer, separated by the *Sanctus*, were but two parts of one continuous prayer. So it came about that the second part, the body of the Canon-prayer, was no longer chanted by the celebrant but was recited. Finally, as has already been said, the loud recitation of this, the body of the Canon-prayer, was discontinued. And then it must have seemed to many that there was no reason for the celebrant to wait until the end of the *Sanctus*. Moreover, the delay had become more and more burdensome because the *Sanctus* had long ago already been taken over from the people by a choir and had become an artistic musical composition which consumed considerable time.

And so the *Sanctus* became a musical piece which bridged over the silent interval between the preface and the Consecration. Then, when the polyphony of the Baroque period drew out the *Sanctus* to still greater length, it became the custom to sing the second part of the hymn, the *Benedictus*, only after the Consecration, with the observation that the literal text seemed to justify this division. This therefore seemed to the rubricists to be the normal arrangement, and so there comes about the decree of the Congregation of Rites of January 14, 1921, stating that it is not permitted to chant the *Benedictus* before the Consecration.

It seems that Pope Pius XI in his wisdom recognized the danger that threatened the intelligent and organic further development of the liturgy if its determination rested entirely in the hands of the rubricists. For on February 6, 1930, he established within the Congregation of Rites an historical department which was to have voice in all liturgical cases. It is to be hoped that this new department will be in position to guard in the future against decisions like the two that have been cited here, which are not in accord with right historical understanding of liturgical rites and prescriptions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This essay was written before the restoration of the Easter Vigil. The latter, together with other reforms initiated by the Sacred Congregation of Rites in recent years, gives promise of a "new era" in the history of the liturgy, in which, without sacrifice of traditional values, the sacramental rites will be better adapted to actual spiritual and pastoral needs. — ED.

The reader who has read and considered this present survey of the history of the Roman liturgy will doubtless be struck by the thought that even a very small alteration or innovation in the sphere of the liturgy may be like the start of an avalanche; the beginning may be quite imperceptible but the consequences may be widespread and far-reaching. How many occurrences in the slipping and sliding process have come about since the time when the Canon began to be recited silently! Indeed one may say that this seemingly slight divergence from the ancient tradition has in natural consequence determined the entire course of development in Christian piety in subsequent centuries and has brought about all those features which many now regret.

From the above it is evident, too, how great is the responsibility of anyone who would undertake a decisive step in such matters. Great patience and restraint is required in all questions presented by the liturgical revival of our times. Decades of years, of intensive study and reflection and planning, are not too much when there is question of assuring the right future development of an organic liturgy, the life and the life-work of which is to continue for hundreds and thousands of years.